

OBITUARIES

John Albert Majors Jr., 1920–2013, and William Harcourt Majors, 1925–2013



Associate editor's note: In 2013, with the deaths of the two Majors brothers, the world of medical librarianship lost two of its illustrious partners from the book industry. These remarkable individuals were honored in 1998 by the Medical Library Association (MLA) with Life Memberships, the highest honor awarded to nonlibrarians. The obituaries that follow were written by two of their longtime colleagues from the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

John Albert Majors Jr., 1920–2013

John Albert Majors Jr. was born in Dallas, Texas, on January 18, 1920, and died there on March 6, 2013. John graduated from Highland Park High School and Kemper Military School, and attended the University of Texas until he went into the military during World War II. He trained as a pilot at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, where he was the top cadet in his class, and he was assigned to train other pilots in Lubbock, Texas, for most of the war. Captain Majors continued his love of flying for most of the rest of his life and often flew a private plane that he co-owned all over the country. His children have memories of their dad taking them up for night flights, together with his beloved Labrador retriever, Major.

After the war, John went to work in the family businesses, J. A. Majors Company and Majors Scientific Books. Over the years, Majors became the number one medical, scientific, and technical book distributorship in the world and developed a thriving journal subscription business. Majors was known for outstanding service and for the incredible people who worked for the companies. The medical advances of the 1950s resulted in the business opening a fourth bookstore, located in Houston's famed Texas Medical Center, in 1956. The Majors family managed the company during several decades of rapid expansion of medical centers and medical education across the country. In 1964, the Houston branch expanded into the science-technology market, maintaining an inventory of books in business, geosciences, electronics, chemistry, physics, and other highly specialized fields. In 1986, Majors acquired Medical & Technical Books in Los Angeles, California, giving the company a coast-to-coast distribution network, while maintaining the same personal service philosophy of the founding generation.

John was made a lifetime member of MLA, together with this brother, William Harcourt Majors, at MLA '98 in Philadelphia in 1998. John retired in 1995 after fifty years in the business and is quoted in a

book written about the Majors businesses as saying: "It wasn't airplanes, mind you, but it has *not* been boring." John was an active leader in many civic and community organizations in Dallas and was a volunteer, fundraiser, and officer for numerous charities.

Memorial contributions in John Majors' name may be made to the Southwestern Medical Foundation (for Alzheimer's disease research) at 3963 Maple Avenue, Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75219, or to YMCA Camp Grady Spruce at 9409 Garland Road, Suite 200, Dallas, TX 75218.

William Harcourt Majors, 1925–2013

William Harcourt Majors was born in Dallas, Texas, on October 16, 1925, and died there on November 2, 2013. Bill grew up in Highland Park, graduating from Highland Park High School. He attended Southern Methodist University briefly before volunteering for the Army Air Corps, in which he became a top turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator and was stationed in Italy, flying missions over Germany. On his twentieth mission, Bill's plane was shot down over German-occupied Yugoslavia. Bill parachuted out, was captured by the Germans, and was a prisoner of war until his liberation by the British Army. He received the Air Medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster for his service.

After the war, Bill attended the University of Texas. In 1948, Bill joined his older brother John and his brother-in-law Jack McClendon in the family businesses, J. A. Majors Company and Majors Scientific Books, in Dallas. At Majors, Bill oversaw all sales and marketing for many years and was president of the retail company, Majors Scientific Books. Under the second generation's leadership, the Majors enterprise thrived and expanded, with branch offices in Houston,

New Orleans, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

Bill called on medical schools and nursing schools across the country in the 1950s and 1960s, and when Jack McClendon died in 1975, Bill took over managing sales representatives for the next fifteen years, before passing that duty on to his two nephews in 1990. Bill was quite the story teller and entertained everyone he met with his hilarious and often outrageous stories. Consequently, all reps knew that when they traveled with Bill it would be an adventure. He never thought of sales calls as work—it was visiting friends or bringing time-saving services to the un indoctrinated. Bill also developed Majors creative advertise-

ment themes for MLA and marketing/sales plans for the reps during those years. He was quoted by all employees saying that "We don't sell books and journals; we sell service."

He and John were a great management team and never missed a national MLA meeting. They were also consistent and generous supporters of the South Central Chapter of MLA from its beginning, and they were close friends with many directors of libraries from the 1950s. Bill, together with his brother John Albert Majors Jr., was made a Lifetime Member of MLA at MLA '98 in Philadelphia in 1998. Bill retired from Majors January 1, 1999, but remained cochair of the Board of Directors until 2004.

Donations may be made in honor of William Majors to the Southwestern Medical Foundation (for Alzheimer's disease research) at 3963 Maple Avenue, Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75219.

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